

love as his selfish nature would admit had been growing up in him.

In fact, he had once or twice made tentative overtures to her. She had repulsed them with the easy way and the smile that covered such a multitude of regrets. If she had faced the problem of her manner of living she might have done what her instinct prompted her—left the office. But she dared not face it, for there was nothing saved; and so she left the responsibility with her employer and tried to forget.

At lunchtime Sandford went up to her.

"Come, Miss Hilda, when is it going to be?" he asked.

"What is that, Mr. Sandford?"

"Say! You know what I've been driving at for the past three months. I mean honest now—a diamond ring and a nice little flat somewhere."

She laughed, evaded him and put on her hat. "We'll talk it over some time," she said evasively.

Yet when he had gone she confessed to herself that she did like Harry Sandford. And she felt, with a woman's intuition, that he was the victim of circumstances. She knew that his father had disowned him when he was a boy, that he had run away, returning hom to find his father dead and his mother, turned out of the home by a greedy landlord, gone for ever from the little village where he was born. If he had had different opportunities—

When he came back from lunch Hilda Lorimer was bending over her work very attentively.

"Well, any more suckers come in?" he asked.

When she did not answer him he amazement he saw that there were tears in her eyes.

"Why—what's wrong?" he asked.

The girl looked up at him. "Everything," she answered briefly. She could no longer fight down her rising indignation. "The business, Mr. Sandford."

"Say! Turning pious?"

"No, but listen, Mr. Sandford. I'll tell you why I couldn't listen to—what you said. I couldn't marry a man who—who did these things. I'll marry you if you'll do—do something honest and give back these people's money to them."

Sandford whistled. "That's a stiff price," he said. He tried to sneer, but something in the girl's earnestness awoke a responsiveness in his own heart.

"That little old lady from Philadelphia, Mrs. Burton, was in while you were at lunch," said the girl. "It nearly broke my heart. Because, you see, she wasn't angry. She has such faith in you. She says she invested in your stock because she knew you had a good, honest name. And—she is coming back at 4 o'clock to see you."

"Thunder!" ejaculated Sandford. "Tell her I've gone to Oshkosh to see my parents."

"Well, it comes to this," said the girl defiantly. "I just can't stand for this business any longer. Won't you—won't you give her back her money at any rate? You see, she—she reminds me of my own mother, and—she reminds me of what your mother ought to have been."

Sandford felt a flush of shame creep up his face. He turned his head away. But the girl still stood beside him, waiting for his decision.

"I'll give her back her money if you'll stay," he said.

"That isn't enough. I can't stay unless—"

"Now, my girl, do you thing I'm going to sacrifice all the money that's come in these last three months?" he demanded resentfully. "Why, those suckers don't know how to take care of their money. They're not fit to have money, Miss Lorimer. If I didn't ease them of it somebody else would. Now see here, if you'll marry me I'll quit the game, but I won't give back the money. What sort of a fool would I be if I did that?"